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AMERICAN ART SCHOOLS.

THE NATIONAL ACADEMY SCHOOLS.

IT is proposed to publish, from time to time, articles upon the principal Art Schools of America, with some account of the methods of instruction employed, and a review of the advantages each can offer. The series may appropriately begin with a consideration of the Schools of the National Academy of Design, New York, —one of the oldest art institutions in the country, and one which, in its long life, has had a greater influence than any other upon the growing Art of America.

The Academy Schools had their origin in the "New York Drawing Association," which was established in the autumn of 1825, "for art study and social intercourse," and which, in its turn, was an offshoot from the earlier "American Academy of the Fine Arts." In 1826, the Drawing Association, which numbered among its members the greater portion of the artists then in the city, became the present National Academy of Design, which was chartered by the Legislature of New York in April, 1828. The National Academy Schools have been open continuously since their foundation, and in them many of the first artists of the country have received much of their art education.

The Academy Schools, at present, are attended by over one hundred and fifty students. Two hundred is the limit of the number that can be accommodated. The departments of instruction comprise the Antique school, the Life school, the Painting school and the Modeling school, besides which there are a Sketch class, a Costume class, a Composition class and courses of lectures on Artistic Anatomy and Perspective.

The Antique and Life schools are under the instruction of Professors L. E. Wilmarth, N. A., and Edgar M. Ward, N. A., Professor Wilmarth received his art education in the schools in which he is now an instructor, in the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Munich under Kaulbach, in the schools of the *Beaux Arts* and in the studio of Jean Leon Gerome, in Paris. Professor Ward was also a pupil of the National Academy, New York, of the *Beaux Arts*, and of Cabanel, Paris. The Antique school is on the Fourth Avenue side of the building, on the ground floor, and is open, both to males and females, from 7 A. M. until 9 P. M. daily, except Saturdays and Sundays. In this school, the students draw from plaster-casts from the antique. The Academy possesses one of the finest collections of casts in the country, comprising reproductions from nearly all of the greatest works of ancient sculpture, besides a large number of casts from modern works of merit. The Life school, on the same floor, has separate classes for males and females, who draw from the nude model. The class for males meets in the forenoons and in the

evenings; the class for females, in the afternoons. The Painting school is under the direction of Mr. William H. Lippincott, who was a pupil of Leon Bonnat, Paris. This school occupies the former Lecture room of the Academy, on the same floor as the Twenty-third street entrance, and is open during the day-time only. In it, students paint from the living model.

J. Q. A. Ward, N. A., has charge of the Modeling school. Mr. Ward first studied his art for a number of years under H. K. Brown, N. A. In the Modeling school, the students at present are all working to reproduce the antique; after they have sufficiently advanced, they will model from life.

The Sketch class, which is open to all the students of the Academy, is peculiarly a students' affair. It meets between four and five o'clock every afternoon except Saturdays and Sundays, and the students themselves take turns in posing; assuming, on such occasions, costumes of some particular historical character or period, or of some contemporary foreign style. Care is taken to have these costumes as accurate as possible, and thus the class work is instructive aside from the value of the practice given in drawing. Announcements of the costumes which will be presented are given out beforehand. Students who wish to be members of the class, but who feel unable to undergo the fatigue of posing for an hour—especially when under the intense observation of their associates—hire models, for whom they furnish the costumes decided upon.

The regular Costume class, however, is a separate affair from this. It meets in the Life school every Saturday and occupies the whole day, the students drawing or painting from the living model in costume. Only members of the Life school are admitted to it.

The Composition class is open to all students of the Academy. Its meetings are held alternate Thursday evenings, after the conclusion of the anatomical lectures. At these meetings drawings made by the members, to illustrate subjects assigned for compositions at the last meeting, are exhibited and criticised by Professor Wilmarth—and sometimes also by some of the other Professors—and subjects are then assigned upon which the students may exercise their minds and pencils during the ensuing two weeks. Usually two subjects are given out; one, an abstract sentiment, the other, a literary work or passage for the suggestion of illustration. The last subjects with which the members of the class labored were "Idleness" and "an illustration of some portion of Longfellow's poem, 'The Building of the Ship.'" Both subjects were illustrated creditably in a number of instances. Students have the privilege of choosing either of the subjects or both of them for illustration, and those who desire may also bring in compositions based upon any other subjects, of their own selection, for criticism.

The Lectures on Artistic Anatomy are delivered Thursday evenings, by J. Wells Champney, A. N. A., who was a pupil of Edouard Frere, Ecouen, France, and of the Academy at Antwerp. These lectures are illustrated by diagrams, the human skeleton and the living model. The Lectures on Perspective are delivered on Tuesday evenings, by Frederick Dielman, N. A., who studied in the schools of the Bavarian Royal Academy and under Diez. These lectures are illustrated by diagrams and sketches. Both courses of lectures begin with the first of the year, and to them all of the Academy students are admitted.

ADMISSION TO THE SCHOOLS.

Applicants for admission to the Academy schools must submit to the School Committee a shaded drawing from a plaster cast of some portion of the human figure. This, if considered of sufficient merit and promise, will admit the applicant to the Antique school for the season, upon the payment of the annual entrance fee of ten dollars. Students in the Antique school are admitted to the Life school on submitting to the committee a drawing of a full-length statue made in the Antique school, which may be approved. Admission to the Painting school is granted those who can present before the committee, an acceptable drawing made either in the Antique or Life schools. Students who have been admitted to the Antique school are admitted to the Modeling school upon application.

Students of former years re-enter the schools each season in the same manner as new applicants, except that the recipients of Prizes, Medals, Honorable Mentions, etc., are readmitted simply on request, without showing a drawing, into the school in which the Prize was received, and members of the Life school of the previous year (who have not taken Prizes) may re-enter that school direct, on exhibiting an approved drawing from life, made in that school during the preceding session.

Instruction in all departments of the Academy is free to those who have complied with the requisites for admission, except in the Painting and Modeling schools, in each of which there is a charge of ten dollars a month. Students provide their own materials, but the Academy defrays the cost of models.

The school committee, which this year consists of S. J. Guy, N. A., E. Wood Perry, Jr., N. A., and Carl L. Brandt, N. A., meets every Monday evening in the Council Room of the Academy, and considers the work submitted during the previous week. The schools open, each year, on the first Monday in October, and close in the middle of the following May. Students may enter, however, at any time during the season.

ACADEMY PRIZES.

Two classes of Medals are offered for competition in the Academy schools. The Suydam Medals, of silver and bronze, are awarded to the two students making the best drawings from the Antique. The Elliott Medals, also of silver and bronze, are given to the two students who attain the highest degree of proficiency in the Life school. In each class, all of the competitors for prizes make their drawings at the same time, from the same model.

Provision also has been made recently for other prizes. The late Mr. Julius Hallgarten, who recently gave the Academy twelve thousand dollars for Exhibition prizes, also gave five thousand dollars, the interest of which is to be expended for prizes in the Academy schools, which shall be awarded annually to deserving students, in such manner as the Council of the Academy may determine. These prizes will be awarded for the first time, this year, Mr. Hallgarten having generously made up, in money, the amount of a full year's interest, the fund having only been established a short time ago.

METHODS OF TEACHING.

"What particular system of teaching do you employ in the Academy?" inquired the writer of Professor Wilmarth, several days ago.

"The same system that is followed in the *Beaux Arts* in Paris, the Bavarian Royal Academy in Munich at the present time, and in all the leading art schools of to-day," answered the Professor. "It is what is called the French, or Painters' system, which, seeing objects in light and shade, represents them as they appear, rather than as they actually are. Our great aim is, *to teach our students to see, and then to express what they see, as they see it.* All of the best artists of the present seek to attain in their works the realization of the same principles which we set before our pupils at the outset. This is in contradistinction with an early German school which taught the student to represent things as they really are, rather than as they appear. That, however, is the method for the sculptor, not for the painter. If you look at a distant object, you see it in masses of light and shade, not in detail; hence to paint it as you know it is, rather than as you see it, is to paint a pictorial falsehood, while to paint the apparent instead of the real thing is to paint the pictorial truth. I have heard truth defined as 'what is, as it is,' but truth in graphic art is rather what is, as it appears. I can illustrate the difference between the two contrasting schools by supposing an artist about to paint a stick, part of which is in the air and part under water. As we look at the stick, it seems to break the straightness of its line where it enters the water, and one part appears to make an angle with the other. We should paint it so, as we see it, but according to the principles

of the school to which I have referred, if they were strictly carried out, we should paint the stick as a straight, unbroken line, because it really is so, and the water only deceives us. Another example of the same thing might be referred to, which would not be quite so extreme as the other. Suppose a man stands just inside a window, between you and the light, and looks toward you. In that case, his face is in deep shadow, and you cannot see the features if you are at some distance from him; yet, according to this old school, all the markings of the features would be painted as seen through this shadow;—a truth in fact, but a truth that the artist could not discover from the standpoint of his picture, and therefore, from that standpoint, an untruth."

'In what way do you teach students to look at Nature?'

"We teach them to approach Nature from the general rather than from the particular. First, they undertake to reproduce the general forms; second, the general masses of light and shadow, and third, the individual forms, with their individual masses of light and shadow. This is the exact antithesis of the tendency of the system of the Pre-Raphaelites, which begins with particulars, with the idea of working toward the general, but usually ends with particulars, the importance of the individual elements being made so great that the general, central thought, is often almost lost sight of altogether."

"Do you insist upon any particular method of *technique*?"

"We do not. If the student succeeds in producing a correct drawing, in which the appearance of Nature is reproduced, that is enough. We will show him what, to us, is the simplest way of getting at results, but if another way is simpler for him, he may employ it. He may use egg-shell paper, English crayon, charcoal-paper or whatever he chooses, and may work with the crayon-point, the stump, a brush or in any other way that he can. We generally recommend the use of the stump and soft crayon, but we do not insist upon this. We only insist upon accuracy of drawing and the realization of the appearances of Nature in the representation."

"It is impossible to formulate methods of teaching art that can be applied in the treatment of all students. You cannot teach them in classes as you would teach them mathematics. Treating a dozen men alike is absolutely ruinous in art. The great object, in my view, is to encourage what talent there may be in the individual and make the most of it, not attempting to change or warp his individuality, but to develop his capability to exercise and express it. Individuality I consider the thing of greatest importance in a man. But the individuality of one man of necessity differs

from that of every other; the instructor, therefore, should find out the peculiarities of each student and instruct him according to his character. Each man has his own organism; in one this may be fine, delicate and exceedingly sensitive, and such a man will work slowly and carefully; in another, the nature may be coarse, blunt and full of brute force, and that man will rush over a prodigious amount of ground, in a strong manner, maybe, in a surprisingly short time. One must be gentle with the refined nature; severity of criticism would discourage and maybe crush it, before, by exercise, it could attain sufficient strength to withstand hard knocks. With the coarser nature one may be more severe and knock off the rough edges as if with a great hammer, until the character is dressed sufficiently to receive the more refining influences. An excess of delicacy, without strength, is useless, and very great strength is valueless if not tempered by refinement. Both elements are necessary to the accomplished artist, and if either element is weak it should be strengthened.

"Again, one man may be able to do in a few moments what another cannot do in an hour. I believe in advancing the rapid worker, and in giving the other time according to his thought. I do not believe in grinding a man through a mill, but in letting him work according to his individual organism and talent. Our great object is to teach the student to think for himself, and learn how to interpret Nature as he goes along. He must learn how to ask Nature questions and also how to receive her answers. One cannot formulate a recipe for learning thus; each man must learn it in his own way. The great end set before the student is to learn to express all the various appearances of Nature truthfully. To do this, he must learn to see the proportions that exist in things, and the relations of light and shade. That includes all of drawing, and with 'truth in color' added, comprehends all there is in painting. If a man has learned these, he can render any effect in Nature. But beyond that power, comes the creative faculty, and that must be in the man himself. No Academy can give him that. We can only assist him by teaching him how to correct his eye and develop quick and accurate perceptions."

"All who study art cannot, of course, become artists, but all will be made to enjoy better both art and Nature for the study; they will be better able to judge the work of others, and to appreciate the refinements of life in general. But it is impossible to make an artist out of 'just any person.' Artistic capability or talent is something born in the individual destined to excel in art, and it must be cultivated by years of earnest study before success can come. It is easy for schools to turn out educated classes, but great men can never be produced by education alone."